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# Gender and Women's Studies Newsletter for Spring 2010

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## Director Reflects on Complicated Issues of Equity, Equality, and Support



This is a very busy time of year at URI, especially this week with planning and anticipating all the inaugural activities for President David Dooley. Dooley's emphasis on creating a campus where we fully celebrate diversity is exciting.

The fact that Women's Studies is responsible for two of the inaugural lectures on the day before the inauguration is also exciting. Thanks in part to Dean Winnie Brownell for her insistence, and thanks to Provost DeHayes for choosing Dr. Bola Akanji as one of two URI Distinguished International Scholars for Spring 2010, WMS, with the help of Economics and African and African American Studies, is responsible for a very important URI lecture on Apr. 7: "Gender Equity in Higher Education: Perspectives from the Global South."

Bola's extensive knowledge about the significance of gender equity and development as an indicator of prosperity for all, and her examination of how gender and human development indices predict measures of sustainability and happiness, will give URI and President Dooley a lot

to think about in shaping their new vision.

WMS is also sponsoring a second lecture for the Wednesday inaugural events. Two nationally recognized leaders and teachers at URI, Violence Prevention Directors Jenn Longa Moio and Keith Labelle, will be presenting a talk people all over the country have already had the benefit of hearing: "URI's National Success Engaging Men in Violence Prevention."

So much to celebrate. Including Prof. Karen Stein's (English and Women's Studies) lecture on "Toni Morrison's Beloved: 'The Original Hunger,'" which focused on Morrison's attention to the building and destruction of community in the face of slavery. Including this week's 16th Annual URI Symposium on Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Intersex Queer and Questioning Issues, "Narrating Equality: Speaking Our Truths."

So many terrific events—and this is only one week. Every day at URI seems to celebrate diversity, creativity, premieres.

In our own halls, the Provost has also given the money to technologically upgrade our seminar room, a sign of his support of WMS.

But there have also been a few serious disappointments.

We were most disappointed to learn in a recent dean's announcement that WMS is not on the list for upcoming tenure or lecturer hires. We've been told things "look possible" for 2012.

Every department in Arts & Sciences is facing dire needs for hires, but the fact that WMS continues to have only one tenure track line, and only one other full-time faculty member, is very discouraging. We continue to rely on a limited number of per course instructors to teach some of our core courses.

There are other more subtle but no

less pressing concerns.

Although President Dooley urges and believes in diversity, there is controversy over his choice of an inauguration speaker who does not support gay or all women's rights. We have an administration that sings the praises of our Women's Studies Program to faculty applicants who want to be sure URI supports gender equity and equality, yet we do not see WMS on the list for hires. We hear of a vision built around gender equity, yet we do not see gender equity in the top echelons at URI.

Feminists remind us that equity and equality have to do with equal access, resources, and control.

As we think about where WMS is going, like WMS faculty all over the country, we are raising some key questions. One could be read positively, but still with concern: Have WMS Programs made themselves obsolete because of the pressure they've put on all departments to have feminist scholars, which many now have, which in the eyes of department heads and

*Continued on back cover*

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# EDITORS NOTES AND RECAP OF PAST EVENTS



From left to right: Prof. Peter Covino, Kara Lafferty, and Mollie Bergeron pose with writer Fawzia Afzal-Khan; Fawzia performs from her work; *Cigar* reporter Noelle Myers interviews Prof. Stephen Barber after his talk; Jenn Brandt poses with students at a Women's Studies informational gathering.



## EDITORS NOTES

I am proud to present to you the Spring Issue of the Women's Studies Newsletter. I am fully supportive and thankful for Director Jody Lisberger's boldness in expressing her opinions. I hope I follow in her footsteps as a brave and conscientious leader as I move on to my next endeavor as member of the Teach For America 2010 Corps in New Orleans. I would also like to emphasize the importance of freedom of speech. More often than not, the University hosts speakers who hold dominant, secular, and liberal views. Having speakers who hold highly conservative opinions can shed new light on and reinforce opinions that we already have. We should remind ourselves to keep an open mind, even if it is to others we deem as close-minded. On another note, I have the utmost confidence in "passing the torch" to Jacqueline Atkins. Jacqueline is a hardworking and creative student I have had the pleasure to teach in my Women's Studies 150 section. It has been a pleasure and I am proud of how sophisticated the Newsletter has become.



-Kara Lafferty



I'm Jacqueline Atkins, the newest editor for the Women's Studies Newsletter. I was thrilled to be offered this position because I want to work in the writing field when I finish college. I think the authors of all the articles featured in this newsletter are immensely talented. I would like to thank them for doing such a great job and for showing how important Women's Studies program is. My experience of being an editor for the first time has been very rewarding and I look forward to what the next three years bring.

-Jacqueline Atkins



# WOMEN'S STUDIES TEACHERS

## REVIEW SAKAI

BY JACQUELINE ATKINS

The University of Rhode Island has recently made the switch from using WebCT to Sakai due to the many problems with WebCT. After conducting interviews with teachers Jenn Brandt and Eva Jones about the use of Sakai in the Women's Studies Program, I have found that the Women's Studies Program has made the best of this switch and has found many benefits to the new program.

Both teachers speak of the benefits Sakai has to offer students in the Women's Studies Program. They both believe one of the best features about Sakai is the discussion forum. This forum benefits both face-to-face and online classes because it allows students to post their thoughts on a given topic.

For online classes in particular, Jones believes the discussion forum is good because it gives everyone in the class a chance to participate in the discussions instead of only a few students speaking during class. As a result, she believes, the classes can have deeper conversations on the topics being discussed.

Brandt also pointed out the useful chat feature, which allows students to talk easily to one another. This contact is important in Women's Studies because of the various group projects that are assigned. Brandt also thinks the drop box is useful because it allows students to drop off assignments if they are unable to attend class. With the swine flu problems of this past fall, the drop box made it easy for sick students to keep on top of their work.

Brandt and Jones also believe that Sakai is beneficial to teachers. Sakai makes it easy for teachers to send out announcements and reminders to classes and to keep in contact with students. Brandt also states that she likes

how the course materials are always available to students because they are posted to Sakai.

Both teachers also attest to Sakai viability in that it is user friendly and not hard to work. Sakai has many benefits for the multiple online Women's Studies classes that are taught at URI. Jones posts her interactive discussions, online quizzes or tests, and writing assignments and class notes on Sakai. She can interact with her students by commenting on their forum posts and sending out class announcements so her students are always up-to-date and active in class, even if they never meet face-to-face.

Another positive thing about Sakai is that, after several problems that needed remedying in the fall, it is now mostly free of problems. Occasionally the program will suffer from a technological problem, such as a system crash or an application glitch, but the majority of the time the program runs smoothly. At the beginning of last fall, the system caused a few problems by not allowing students to access the course sites and by messing up individual messaging between teachers and students, but there have been no such problems reported since.

Over all, the teachers believe the Women's Studies Program uses Sakai to a greater degree than some other departments. Almost every Women's Studies instructor uses Sakai as part of their teaching, whether as a supplement to the class or a virtual classroom. Sakai in this Program also facilitates a greater sense of community. The Women's Studies Program has faculty Sakai sites that share resources and syllabi. Jones believes "the Women's Studies Program's use of Sakai exemplifies the progressive and interdisciplinary component of

Women's Studies as a discipline."

Brandt and Jones have both used WebCT and have found that after switching to Sakai, they much prefer the new program. There have been fewer system problems and for them Sakai is a more user friendly program. Recognizing the power and reach of online teaching, Women's Studies has also won grants to fund workshops to develop their program's expertise and pedagogy in this forward-looking technology.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Apr. 5, 4:30-6 p.m. Lippitt 402** "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: 'The Original Hunger,'" Prof. Karen Stein

**April 7, noon, Center for Biological and Life Sciences 100,** "Gender Equity in Higher Education: Perspectives from the Global South," Dr. Bola Akanji, Distinguished International Scholar

**April 7, 4 p.m. Swan Auditorium** "URI's National Success Engaging Men in Violence Prevention," Keith Labelle and Jenn Longa Moio, Directors URI Violence Prevention

**Apr. 15, 2-3:15 p.m. Hargdge Forum, MCC** "Sex-Trafficking: Law and Policy," Prof. Donna Hughes

**Apr. 20, 11-12:15 p.m. Galanti Lounge,** Symposium on Global Freedom Movements

# URI THEATRE PROF. BYRNA WORTMAN: URI PREMIERE OF **UNBOUND** "A WOMAN'S STORY"

BY ANNATHENA GRIGELEVICH

*Based on the journals of British actress Fanny Kemble (1809-93), playwright Laura Marks portrays in Unbound a life of a remarkable woman of artistry, curiosity, and humanity. In the 1830s, on a tour in New York City, Fanny falls in love with the charming, wealthy gentleman, Pierce Butler, and happily and willingly gives up her theatrical career to become his wife and soon the mother of his two daughters. Despite his resistance, she wins him over to the notion of leaving Northern society for life on his family plantation in Georgia, where who and what she encounters changes her forever. The depth of her understanding of what it means to live off of others' labor creates a moral dilemma and painful life decision that is the heart and soul of this Rhode Island premiere of Unbound. (URI Theatre Department)*

*Here, Professor and Director Bryna Wortman reflects on her role as a director and her views on women's strengths.*

**Annathena Grigevich:** How did choosing this play for URI's 2009-2010 season come about?

**Bryna Wortman:** There was a fellow member in the League of Professional Theatre Women who had started a theatre company called Prospect Theater Company and they were doing a play... I went to see the production and [it] was an early production of *Unbound*. I think it was the second... I liked the play so much that I asked the stage manager, "Is there a way that I can get in touch with the writer?" and she said, "Well she happens to be here today." [I] introduced myself, explained who I was, said that I would be thrilled if she would let me bring the script or send it to me so I could let my colleagues read it and see if they might be interested also in doing this. The script was liked but it didn't fit with that year...and here it is 5 years later and last spring one of my colleagues said, "What ever happened to that wonderful play?" and I said "Good question"... [playwright, Laura Marks] was quite happy and we renewed our connection and so we're doing *Unbound*.

**AG:** Do you see *Unbound* more as a human struggle or a woman's struggle?

**BW:** Well, this is a woman's story. It's definitely a woman's story. I'm not saying that men don't have principles



Jen Michaels, Jolie Lippincott, Oliva Knoshatefen, Jolie (again), and Steph Rogers all play role of Fanny in the URI Production of *Unbound* which opens on April 22nd at 7:30 p.m.



and haven't fought for their principles, and men haven't had to give up things that mattered to them to have what their principles prescribe. But this is definitely a woman's story. And I think it's much harder, especially at that time (1830s-1840s) because of economics, for a woman to survive without a man's patronage of some kind.

**AG:** What role do you think class and privilege played in Fanny Kemble's ability to advocate for her husband's slaves?

**BW:** She was British so she had nothing of the American prejudices... she was from another ilk... She just could not stop bringing up problems that she would see everyday [on the plantation]...coming from a totally different culture. Also, her parents had a more egalitarian relationship, and I think

that was unusual... and they were very in love and so she had a different take on it. In terms of class, I don't think Fanny was of the upper[class]. I mean she wasn't royalty, but she was theatrical royalty...and she didn't have money of her own. When she split, it really was principle...she had to find a way of supporting herself.

**AG:** You have directed The Laramie Project, about the murder of openly gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard. Are there common themes you are interested in addressing in your theatrical work?

**BW:** I directed it here. It was a Rhode Island premiere. I love plays that not only have an artistic theme or message but are part of our humanities and

*Continued on page 5*

# WORTMAN REFLECTS ON GENDER ROLES OF WOMEN AND MEN IN URI THEATRE

cultural and political fabric. I've done *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Angels in America: Part I*. I've done *Top Girls*, Caryl Churchill's play and Craig Lucas's *Small Tragedy*. I did *The Merchant of Venice*, which is very difficult because that hits on anti-semitism [with Shylock] and racism with the Prince of Morocco... the actors, you know, they just didn't have these prejudices and yet they had to behave toward one of their own, who was playing Shylock, in a rather despicable way, but as if it was everyday stuff... and of course here we are with *Unbound*.

**AG:** Do you have any observations about gender roles of women and men in the URI theatre, both students and faculty?

**BW:** Well, we're a small department and we have four tenured faculty and one lecturer and a number of guest artists, and I do believe that we respect one another despite our genders. When we had a first reading of this play, *Unbound*, the whole cast and the understudies and the management, we sat down and we read the play, and when it was finished I raised questions. (Students) contributed to discussion and I could tell that there was a difference than with some of the other plays because most playwrights are men...usually there are far more men in a Shakespeare play and even in contemporary plays where, because of economics, it needs to be a smaller cast; nonetheless, usually there are more men than women. Here was an instance where we had a heroine...it's more weighted toward the women... it's much more a women's play. And so I was saying, "This is unusual



Jolie Lippincott and Jen Michaels rehearse.

for you isn't it?" [to] the men, and it was! We were talking about it for the first time in my experience here. This was a discussion to be had, and the women, we had been doing table work the week before while another play was going on, and the men were busy, so we were able to talk about the play and get into the nitty-gritty issues, and all the women were able to say how they felt. Suddenly, we were in this room and the men were there and the women were able to say, "It's different from when we were around the table, all women. It just felt more free; there weren't as many obstacles." I said, "Yeah, but these are the men who are in the play. They are the obstacles." They're either the obstacles or facilitators for the women who are in it. And it's just amazing! It's fascinating! It's totally fascinating. And I am loving what I'm doing with them. I adore our students. They're extremely talented...

we all learn from one another.

**AG:** What do you hope the audience will come away from this play with?

**BW:** I hope they will come away being very entertained, very engaged at the different way that a play can be done because it's not a traditional two or three act drama...it's a theatrical piece that flows over time and space. And so I hope they come with us on our journey. And I hope that they go and read more about Fanny Kemble, and that they admire her and talk about her and tell people to come and see the production. But I also hope that they'll do research about other women. At Perishable last week, I went to see a play about Harriet Jacobs, a slave narrative, the only one we have, from a woman slave, and I wanted to see it not only because my lighting designer on *Unbound* did the lighting for that play, but because I wanted to see slavery from a slave's point of view. And I was deeply moved, and it made me know even more Fanny's pain in being exposed to slavery.

## Performance Dates

April 22-24 and April 29-May 1, 2010  
at 7:30 pm

April 25 & May 2, 2010 at 3:00 pm

Tickets: \$16 General

\$12 Seniors, URI Faculty and Staff

\$10 Students

URI Box Office:  
(401) 874-5843



# NEW BOOKS BY WOMEN'S STUDIES PROFESSORS

**KAREN STEIN, PROF. OF ENGLISH AND WOMEN'S STUDIES**, has been awarded a contract to write a book about Rachel Carson for the Critical Literacy Series: Challenging Authors and Genres, edited by Paul Thomas. The book is intended for the general reader, and for high school and community college teachers and students. Stein has also just published a book called *Reading, Learning, Teaching Toni Morrison*.

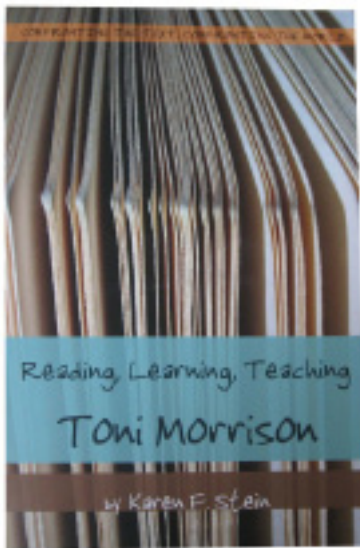
Rachel Carson is perhaps the most significant environmentalist of the twentieth century. *Silent Spring*, her graphic and compelling description of the damage caused by the pesticide DDT, opened our eyes to the issue of pollution and to the interconnectedness

of ecological systems, indeed, of all living beings and of the planet itself.

Stein's project is a new approach to Rachel Carson, using the perspectives of eco-feminist theory and other theories of environmentalism and demonstrating Carson's importance to contemporary issues. Carson's vision of the interconnectedness of natural systems is increasingly relevant to our time.

Carson's understanding of nature's web of life challenges us to address the manifold implications of global warming and environmental pollution. To enrich and expand our understanding of Carson's work, Stein will analyze Rachel Carson's struggles and achievements as a woman scientist in a male-dominated field; discuss several important American environmentalists and nature writers, both those who paved the way for Carson's work and those who learned from and are extending her work; discuss the history, economics, and ethics of pesticide use in the U.S.; analyze the ethical implications of using DDT to combat mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria; analyze the arguments Carson put forth in *Silent Spring* and her other books; and relate Carson's ideas to current thinking about global warming, ocean pollution, and the impact of pesticides and other contaminants on the environment.

Carson, a reticent woman, took on the task of investigating the consequences of such widespread use of DDT. Her work challenged the practices and belief systems of economic entomologists, pesticide manufacturers, agribusiness, government regulatory agencies, and common citizens.



**PROFESSOR FAWZIA AFZAL-KHAN READ FROM HER NEW MEMOIR, LAHORE WITH LOVE, GROWING UP WITH GIRLFRIENDS, PAKISTANI-STYLE**, on March 1st as part of the of International Women's Studies Celebration and the English Department's Read/Write Series. An enthusiastic crowd filled up Lippitt's lecture room.

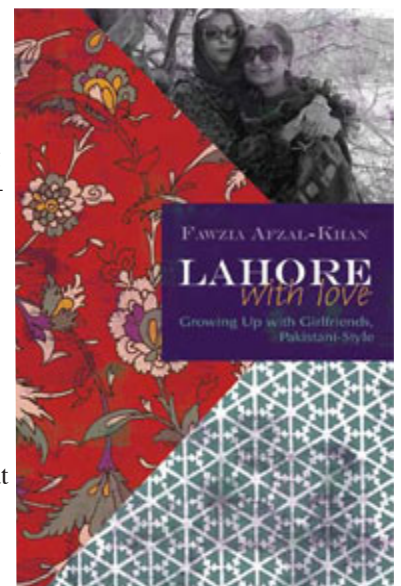
In her memoir, Afzal-Khan invites us to look at a complicated story with an imprisoning set of conditions, and yet a story that runs well beyond that time and place. This multidimensional story leads us to take a second look, back in time, forwards and then back again. The memoir beckons us to look even when it becomes unbearable.

Intertwined with relationships in this memoir is the political and social landscape of Pakistan. Afzal-Khan never lets her readers forget how the relationships in the memoir, and the relationship she has to Pakistan, bleed into one another, spilling onto every moment.

Afzal-Khan layers the new rise of Islamic fundamentalism and Sharia law with a young woman making plans for school, having a fierce love for her friends, longing to save a friend, to save all of her friends, to save women. She gives a voice to those in her life who have lost theirs, or more accurately, those who have had their life dictated by public laws that curtail the rights of women.

In the memoir, there are profound moments of loss and endearment as Afzal-Khan reflects on her friendships and her relationship to her country of Pakistan.

- Kara Lafferty



# GANG-RAPE THREAT ISN'T 'FREE SPEECH': PROJO SPEAKS OUT FOR "BRAVE WOMEN FIGHTING TO CRIMINALIZE PROSTITUTION"

BY EDWARD ACHORN

FEATURED IN THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL ON TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2010

The Internet has undeniably helped spread information of great use to a free society and, in many cases, permitted more robust debate on issues than was once possible. But powerful tools can be used for evil purposes as well as good. As everyone knows, the Internet has also opened up the sewers and permitted cowards, bullies, liars, child molesters and character assassins to crawl out.

Behavior that once would have merited a swift response from society perhaps jail time, perhaps a salutary punch in the nose is now indulged in without fear of retribution.

Language that was once unimaginable in public discourse is the common currency of the Web, and our culture gets progressively coarser and cruder as this becomes accepted.

Just ask the brave women who led the fight to make prostitution illegal in Rhode Island, showing compassion for children coerced into the sex trade and for young Asian women brought here as virtual slaves and cruelly compelled to suffer.

Donna Hughes, a women's-studies professor at the University of Rhode Island, and Melanie Shapiro, a law student at Roger Williams University Law School, are finding themselves libeled, verbally attacked with sexual smears and threatened with rape by low-life "johns" in retaliation for their efforts.

Can nothing be done about this? Are there any decent people left in society who will stand up and protect women against such abuse? You have to wonder.

I have seen the Internet attacks on these women and they are sickening.

I would fiercely defend the right of anyone including these characters to discuss the merits of the state's joining the rest of America in making prostitution illegal. But nobody should smear, libel and threaten.

As Ms. Hughes says: "They are entitled to their view of the change in the law. The comments . . . cross a line, though, in my opinion."

"I think it is unfortunate that they have resorted to such low-level comments, but I am really concerned about the women in the brothels who have to encounter men like these. It shows you what kind of men they have to face," Ms. Shapiro said.

On one prostitution forum, some low-life has chosen the screen name of "Donna Hughes" and pretends to be the professor. I quote these (with the permission of the real Ms. Hughes and Ms. Shapiro) only to help Rhode Islanders understand what is going on.

"It is my sincere hope that tons and tons of women will be caught, sentenced to prison and converted to lesbianism," the phony "Donna Hughes" states in one post.

"I will not rest until all the Asian women learn heterosexual sex is wrong!" the fake "professor" states in another.

The phony also takes aim at state Rep. Joanne Giannini (D.-Providence), who led the fight in the General Assembly to close Rhode Island's prostitution loophole.

"I tried to turn out JoAnne Giannini but she wants to stay with her cop husband."

Some of the members of this forum, not the brightest lights, seem to believe that these messages are really

coming from Professor Hughes.

" 'Heterosexual sex is wrong'? Where would 'Donna' be if her parents felt that way?" asks one.

"If you believe that 'heterosexual sex is wrong' then you must be a lesbian. . . . Get real go [engage in a sex act] and realize what you are missing."

Another poster writes: "I bet that Shapiro 'female dog' can [engage in a sexual act] like a champ!"

And those are some of the less vicious ones. Much of the banter cannot get within a mile of being printed in a newspaper.

One coward wrote this of Professor Hughes: "What this chic [sic] needs is for all of us to line her up against the wall and show her what we think of her rhetoric one at a time."

Is an undisguised threat of gang rape really protected speech? Is stealing someone's name to libel her?

Not in my book. Such language is not an attempt to debate an issue but to intimidate, punish and humiliate people and dehumanize women by treating them as rape objects for practicing their rights as good citizens, entering the political arena in Rhode Island and peacefully seeking change.

Are there no law officers willing to investigate this? Are there no lawyers willing to belly up to the bar and take on a libel and intimidation lawsuit on a contingency-fee basis?

If such treatment of women is deemed perfectly legal, fine and dandy, is there another way to make it clear to the perpetrators that society frowns on their conduct? When I was growing up, boys were taught that real

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# KATIE PICARD'S "FEMME FATALE"

BY KARA LAFFERTY



**PHOTOS BY  
BRONNIE LAFFERTY**

URI senior and artist Katie Picard will be featuring her paintings and photographs for her independent art show on June 30th. Her pieces are centered around the concept of "Femme Fatale." Last semester Picard studied the artist Henry Asencio featured at the Rain Gallery in Newport. Asencio paints female figures and is more abstract than Picard's usual style. Picard drew inspiration from Asencio and wanted to "twist the ideas of abstract paintings of the body with body painting." Picard also wanted all of her pieces to "portray female power" in some way.

Aside from Asencio, Picard is inspired by "people everywhere." Picard explains that "I am a people watcher. I look at faces and see how I would paint them." Picard took a leap from people watching to looking around for models to be body-painted. Picard was surprised to find that many women were excited to be a part of her project.

I agreed to model for Picard. Even though I had never modeled before, I still went into the experience with preconceived notions. I thought Picard, the artist, would tell me exactly how she wanted me to pose and how she wanted me to look. This couldn't have been further from the truth.

She wanted me to pick the tapestry that I would be photographed with. She also showed me different poses and asked me to choose the one I felt the most comfortable with. The experience was a positive one and also one that builds self-confidence. The feeling of getting body-painted can be equated with perhaps a mud massage (not that I've had one).

Picard explained to me that it is very important that she and I be autonomous and together on every aspect of the project. I asked Picard if she "felt weird seeing people naked." Picard explained that she had been taking classes with nude models since she was twelve. Picard elaborates on her definitions and distinctions between naked and nude. She believes, "nude is tasteful and for the sake of art, not for the sake of the person, instead the person becomes a canvas; overall nudity is sensual." She thinks of "naked" as having a more "sexual connotation."

Picard hopes her show will be entertaining. She explains, "People may be uncomfortable with nude, painted models walking around." There will also be large-scale photos of the painted models. Picard first had the idea

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# THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES AT URI: WHY THEY MATTER

BY MARISA O'GARA

This year, a group of female students put on a production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, on March 4th, 5th and 6th. Since this show is a yearly tradition, I have attended the show for the past two years, and I will, without a doubt, continue to attend the performances for the remainder of my time here at the University.

Although every year slight changes are made by adding or adjusting monologues and, of course, by changing the women performing the monologues, the show does not differ greatly from year to year. And yet, I would gladly view the show numerous times. In fact, many people have been known to attend multiple viewings of this show in the same year because they not only enjoy *The Vagina Monologues* so much but feel the important impact of the show.

What is it about *The Vagina Mono-*

*logues* that makes it so powerful that it continues to impress us and draw us back in? For me, it is a few things. First the monologues are extremely comical. Several of them never fail to bring tears of laughter to my eyes. For example, "The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy" is a monologue featuring a female sex worker and ending in a triple orgasm. Then there are always a few monologues that overwhelm me with empathy and move me to tears of sadness. This year it was "The Village Was My Vagina," a devastatingly powerful monologue about sexual abuse in rape camps in Bosnia and Kosovo.

I also love that millions of dollars have gone toward prevention of violence because of *The Vagina Monologues*. I walk out of the show and feel a strong sense of female empowerment and appreciation. I appreciate how the monologues are able to

show that female empowerment does not necessitate male detriment. My favorite part is that in experiencing *The Vagina Monologues*, we are forced to acknowledge and sit through topics that often make us so uncomfortable that we tend to leave them unspoken. These topics include everything from the enjoyment of sex to the calamitous consequences of rape.

*The Vagina Monologues* also invites women to accredit themselves. It makes us laugh, and it makes us cry. Most importantly, it instills a sense of collectivity and reminds us of the human element that so links us all. The combination of these elements carried from year to year and the new elements we see alongside them help enforce the feminist and women-celebrating values that rest at the core of the production while still engaging our curiosity and sustaining our interest.

*Picard Article Continued from page 8*

to try body-painting when she took a photography and digital art class a year ago. She wanted to "bring [her] own style to the class." She still wanted to paint even though it was a photography class. Her first body painting was with one of her friends. She actually didn't even use conventional paint. She used liquid black eye liner to paint music notes all over her friend's body.

URI's Art Department has had a strong influence on Picard. She believes the Department is "very understated" and the teachers are all knowledgeable, "just as good as RISD," the graduate school of choice for Picard. She hopes to sell some pieces at her upcoming show. She plans on working on her portfolio and doing more solo shows in the future.

Picard hopes that people will appreciate the powerful and diverse group of women featured in her pieces. Picard doesn't believe that all art needs to have a message. She thinks art can "pleasing and beautiful to look at." Her philosophy: "Anyone can appreciate art."



**FEMME FATALE  
WAREHOUSE EXHIBIT  
COMING UP IN JUNE**



# SCHWEERS LECTURE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH: SAVING YOUR HEART

BY LAURA DAMON



On March 18, URI had the good fortune to have Dr. Barbara Roberts, Director of the Women's Cardiac Center at the Miriam Hospital and an Associative Clinical Professor of Medicine for the Brown University Program in Medicine, come speak about women and heart disease.

What is so shocking about heart disease, Roberts said, is how most people think breast cancer and HIV/AIDS are the main worries for women. Yet heart disease is responsible in the deaths of eight million women each year, she said, almost eighteen times the number who die of breast cancer and six times more than the number who die of HIV/AIDS.

Roberts questions why heart disease is not more widely recognized as a woman's disease. She reports that the disease is more deadly for women, and that more women than men have died of the disease every year since 1984.

But for women, the symptoms are more subtle. A woman may show signs of heart disease, Roberts reports, with Angina Pectoris, a squeezing, burning, pressure in the chest, back, arms or jaw. The symptom is usually brought on by exertion or emotional stress and goes away in a few minutes with rest and relaxation.

Roberts said that men tend to present their heart disease with a heart attack or cardiac death. Because women's symptoms are more subtle, and men's more violent, it seems as if men receive all the heart disease recognition, so its recognition as a deadly women's disease can continue to be lost under the radar.

Roberts said another reason heart disease is not more widely recognized as a women's disease is because of denial. Young women are dying of this disease, but because heart disease is associated with older people, doctors tend not to be on the lookout for it with young female patients.

We also live in a patriarchal culture. Roberts also discussed how the medicines and procedures performed today, the effective procedures that save the lives of men that could also save the lives of women, are not performed on women.

Roberts noted that nuclear stress tests are probably the most accurate form of testing for heart disease. Yet, in a study in which 390 people were admitted to nuclear stress tests, 137 were female, 253 were male.

According to Roberts, men are also ten times more likely than women to receive the definitive study to completely verify the disease. In terms of medicine, men are more likely to receive cardiology consultation (12.4% vs. 4.2%), nitro glycerin, aspirin, and anticoagulants (blood thinners). Women are more likely to receive narcotics and anti-anxiety medicines. Roberts discussed how doctors have built-in biases. Women are seen as smaller and more fragile, and thus are given less intense, although effective treatments. Women also have a later onset of heart disease, about ten years later than men.

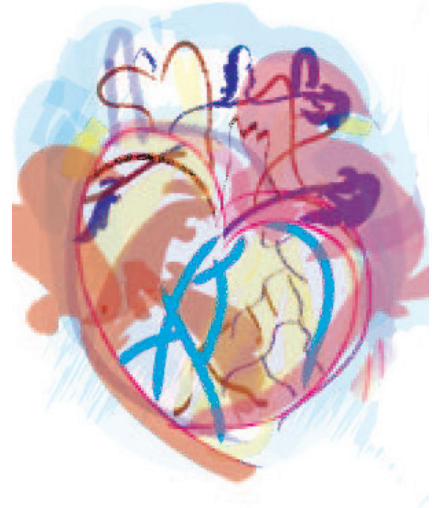
Doctors have a problem with diagnosing young, seemingly healthy women. Sadly, however, 370,000 women in the U.S. had heart attacks in 2006, Roberts said, and most were under the age of 45.

A doctor passionate about women and heart disease, Roberts was the first female cardiologist in the state and was also the first woman ever accepted into the Gorlin Cardiology Fellowship at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, a Harvard University Medical School Teaching Hospital. A self-proclaimed feminist, Roberts claims, "I was determined to be a doctor. I wanted to be something that was very far from the norm for women in those days, and being a doctor was about as far as you could get."

According to Roberts, female doctors are necessary in catering to the needs of women. "For many centuries, medicine has been controlled by men—most physicians were men—and it was felt that you could study men and generalize those results to women. But we know now that's not the case."

Roberts believes there is much women can do to lower their risk of

*Continued on page 12*





# WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS: CONFERENCES & STUDY ABROAD

## ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN PSYCHOLOGY: UNITY AND DIVERSITY **BY ANNATHENA GRIGELVICH**

In March of 2009, the Association for Women in Psychology held its 34th annual conference in Newport, RI. The AWP has been focused on encouraging feminist psychology for the past forty years. Through the efforts of this not-for-profit organization, the APA Division of the Psychology of Women (Division 35) was established in 1973. Essentially and according to their official website at [www.awpsych.org](http://www.awpsych.org), the AWP is a "scientific and educational feminist organization devoted to reevaluating and reformulating the role that psychology and the mental health field generally play within women's lives."

"Feminist Empowerment Through Unity and Diversity" was the theme for the conference, which was held on March 12-15 at the Newport Marriott Hotel. It was true to its mission in presenting an array of diverse topics, workshops, and discussions from the top researchers, clinicians, and educators currently addressing issues in feminist psychology across the United States and Canada.

There was a strong University of Rhode Island presence within the conference, which was coordinated by URI Professors Dr. Kat Quina, also coordinator of the Providence Feinstein Campus Psychology Program, and Dr. Mary Zahm. Among the most notable voices was that of social psychologist, author, and URI professor emeritus Dr. Bernice Lott, who was honored in 2009 along with Heather E. Bullock of University of California, Santa Cruz, with the Distinguished Publication Award for "Psychology and Economic Injustice: How Personal, Professional, and Political Issues Intersect."

Other highlights included presenta-

tions by URI graduate students A. Cassandra Golding and Tricia K. Williams, as well as recent graduate of the URI clinical psychology program, Asako C. Matsuura. Psychology Department Chair, Dr. Patricia Morokoff, is the major professor for all three participants.

Golding states that her research "tests a sophisticated latent variable model of relationship functioning in

female couples and is meant to further theoretical understandings of how women engage in relationships and validate a measure of the Healthy Emotional Reliance Scale (HERS), to be used in clinical treatment of female couples in therapy." For this study Golding collected a nationwide sample of 1,024 participants, a sample currently being analyzed for her dissertation defense. *Continued on page 12*

## A JOURNEY HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD: A LOOK AT FEMINISM IN AUSTRALIA **BY JESS WILLIAMS**



It is widely known that feminism and feminist theory exist globally. Now that I have been studying abroad for just over one month in Queensland, Australia, my eyes have been opened to a very different world of proclaimed feminists, or lack thereof.

I am currently enrolled in two Women's Studies courses at James Cook University – Townsville, one being Australian Women's Studies. This course is an introduction to the history of feminists and feminism in Australia. Upon entering my first lecture for this course, I realized there were only eight other women, ranging in age 20 to 68. As we introduced ourselves to our lecturer and classmates,

I discovered that I was the only student in this introductory course with a background and academic focus in Women's Studies as a discipline.

Unfortunately, I was also the only woman to identify as a feminist. Now, it is absolutely understandable to not claim yourself to be something you have yet to be knowledgeable about, but it was disheartening to hear one woman claim, "I do believe in the things that feminists and feminism stand for, but I do not identify myself as a feminist because it just raises too much controversy." Sadly, it is my experience that my classmate is one of many college women hesitant to identify themselves as feminists to avoid controversy and judgment.

As a woman, who does openly proclaim my feminist identity, I have become more empowered. I embrace the knowledge I have gained from URI by sharing my thoughts and experiences with others. I deeply value the challenge of encouraging other women to support and openly relate to feminism.

I have come to realize that even on the opposite side of the world, in a country with women's history very similar to that of the United States, women continue to be objectified.

**Registration is still open for the following summer courses being offered by Women's Studies.**

**All classes are offered online and are a great opportunity to get ahead on your general education/degree requirements.**

WMS 150 - Introduction to Women's Studies

WMS 301 - Women's Professional Development and Leadership

WMS 315 - Feminist Theory and Methodology

WMS 325 - International Women's Issues

WMS 350 - Postfeminisms, Popular Culture, and Contemporary Gender Studies

WMS 350 - Women and Aging

WMS 350 - Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece and Rome

WMS 360 - Men and Masculinities

WMS 370 - Sex Trafficking

### *Director's Note Continued*

administrators now appears to reduce the need for a WMS Program?

The other questions are less nice: Why are we still fighting the same battles as before—or worse? Closure of programs, haggling for money, no tenure lines, etc. Have institutions basically put WMS on the bottom of their priority lists, not putting money where their mouth is? Is this lip service because they know WMS faculty will continue to do their own scholarship and give women prominence at their universities, even as institutions fail to take seriously WMS as a discipline worthy of adequate tenure track lines?

Even in the face of growing numbers of WMS majors at URI and marvelous work being done in the Program, the questions are looming.

- Jody Lisberger

### *Psychology Conference Continued*

In recognition of this work and similar research, she has recently been honored with the URI Graduate Student Leadership Diversity Award.

Other topics addressed throughout the conference were the intersections of gender, culture, and privilege, bias in crisis pregnancy centers, feminist psychology to feminist spirituality, military sexual trauma, and a feminist perspective on addiction and recovery, which was presented by Dr. Dorothy Bianco of the Rhode Island College Institute of Addiction Recovery. The multitude of Film and Media presentations included, "The Changing Face of Feminist Psychology" chaired by Professor Alexandra Rutherford of York University, Toronto. Also part of the diverse offerings were Wellness Activities, which made the services of reiki, energy healing, and massage therapy practitioners available to conference attendees.

The 2009 AWP conference created an environment and experience that showed how the incorporation of feminism can benefit society through educating, learning, networking, and unifying our common goals and interests toward a healthier future. More information about the Association for Women in Psychology, including student membership registration, can be found at [www.awpsych.org](http://www.awpsych.org).

### *Gang-Rape as Threat Continued*

men stand up for women and insist that they be treated with respect.

That sounds old-fashioned, I admit. But must Rhode Islanders accept that, in the age of Internet sleaze, women should expect to be attacked this way in a public forum if they are unwilling to shut up and go away?

This Rhode Islander, for one, will never accept that.

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The Women's Studies Newsletter received permission from Edward Achorn to reprint this op-ed.

### *Heart Disease Continued*

heart disease and live longer, healthier lives, but they need specialized cardiac care. Women like Roberts pioneer this kind of care; they fight for women's recognition.

Roberts reported that 8.4 million women in the U.S. currently have coronary heart disease. Steps can be taken, however, to prevent this disease or lower the risk.

According to Roberts, smoking is a "socially acceptable form of suicide." Smoking, she said, is the number one preventable cause of heart attacks. Smoking also increases women's risk of the disease more than men's risk.

Smoking causes more than 400,000 deaths a year, Roberts said. Smoking increases atherosclerosis throughout the body, as well as the risk of diabetes. Atherosclerosis is a form of hardening of the arteries in which plaque builds up and limits blood flow. Exercise is also necessary. According to Roberts, only 1 in 4 women get the recommended 30 minutes of exercise at least five times a week.

Along with not smoking and exercise, Roberts says women must follow a heart healthy diet. She was adamant in saying, "heart-healthy means plant-based; meat should be treated as a condiment and not an entrée." She also said chicken is meat, and red meat should be eaten in limitation. Instead consume fish such as salmon or trout.

Roberts clarified that cholesterol is not increased by eating cholesterol; it is increased by consuming saturated fats. So she recommended women avoid trans-fats such as are in margarine and pastries.

Roberts urges women and men to keep themselves healthy. Adopting a healthy lifestyle, she says, is one step we can take as a nation to increase awareness on gender specific aspects of diseases, and one step we can take to save lives.